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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [PBTS](#) [OSCE](#) [UP](#) [MD](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: TRANSNISTRIA: RESPONDING TO RUSSIA'S SHIPMENT OF
HUMANITARIAN AID

REF: STATE 46152

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns. Reason 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) Ambassador made reftel demarche to DFM Karasin March ¶23. Karasin reiterated that the GOR had serious concerns about developments in Transnistria, but his comments went primarily to political pressures centered in the Duma and in some regions. He acknowledged that current conditions do not amount to a "full-blown humanitarian crisis" in Transnistria, although he professed concern about medical supplies in some areas. He hoped that the Russian convoy of humanitarian aid would not encounter steps to impede it. Once it had been delivered, Moscow would look again at the situation. (Comment: Karasin's comments implied, although he did not explicitly say, that the humanitarian convoy was a one-time measure undertaken to respond to domestic political pressures and would probably not be repeated. End Comment) He conceded that Smirnov's call for an increase in Russian troop strength in Transnistria had been unhelpful, and said Moscow had no plans to respond positively to it. Still, he said, it was not only Smirnov who needed to avoid unhelpful statements.

¶2. (C) In the absence of Special Envoy Nesterushkin, we followed up with MFA Moldova Office Director Fomin. Fomin said Russia's evaluation of the situation, and the reasons for it, were unchanged: Ukraine and Moldova bear responsibility for using economic measures to impose political pressure on Transnistria. It was part of an attempt to eliminate Russia's role in the peace process, which was unacceptable to Moscow. Russia's public statements were therefore "based on reality."

¶3. (C) Russia did not share the OSCE's evaluation of the humanitarian situation, Fomin said. Although people will not starve, medicine would be a problem. Factories would close, putting thousands out of work -- the Tirateks textile factory, with between 6000 and 6500 workers, would cease operations March 23. Emotions would run high. The donations from Russia came primarily from regions with historic "twin" and economic ties to Moldova, such as the Yamal-Nenets Republic. Russia had worked with Ukraine -- which was also offering aid -- and Moldova to ensure there were no hitches in aid delivery.

¶4. (C) Fomin agreed that Russia could influence Smirnov -- and would try to influence both him and the Moldovans to return to the peace process, though perhaps not as soon as the April 4-5 meeting proposed by OSCE HOM Hill. Russia was not considering a postponement of the scheduled visit of President Voronin. Russia feared that provocations could derail the return to peace negotiations. Tiraspol "Parliamentarians" were planning a meeting on March 31, and it would be important to see what steps they might take. Luckily, "there does not seem to be any hysteria."

15. (C) Fomin said current Russian troop levels in Transnistria were fully adequate to their tasks. There was a minor problem with the weapons store at Kolbasna: the units tasked with providing fire and emergency coverage were located too far from the store itself to provide assistance in a timely way. Fomin said the Russians were remedying that through training, not increased staffing.

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